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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 07 RIYADH 003482

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SUBJECT: SAUDI ARABIA: USAMA BIN LADIN (C-NA8-00989)

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11. (S) THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ON EX-SAUDI TERRORIST USAMA BIN LADIN, WHICH INCLUDES INPUT FROM CONSULATES DHAHRAN AND JEDDAH, IS KEYED TO QUESTIONS POSED IN REF A.

1A. (S) ISLAMIC LEADERS ADMIRER BY BIN LADIN:

BIN LADIN WAS RAISED IN A CONSERVATIVE WAHHABI MUSLIM FAMILY. AS A YOUNG MAN HE REPORTEDLY WAS INFLUENCED BY CONSERVATIVE, NEO-SALAFI PREACHER MUHAMMAD BIN SALIH AL-UTHAYMIN, IMAM OF THE GRAND MOSQUE IN UNAYZAH AND A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF SENIOR ULAMA. DURING HIS YEARS IN AFGHANISTAN, HE DEVELOPED LINKS WITH MEMBERS OF THE EGYPTIAN ISLAMIC JIHAD AND AL-GAMA'AH AL-ISLAMIYYA MOVEMENTS, GROUPS INFLUENCED BY THE WORK OF EGYPTIAN MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD THINKER SAYYID QUTB. UPON HIS RETURN FROM AFGHANISTAN, BIN LADIN WAS TAKEN WITH THE PREACHING OF THE SAUDI "AWAKENING MOVEMENT" PREACHERS, ESPECIALLY SAFAR AL-HAWALI AND SALMAN AL-AWDAH, ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT HAVE MUCH DIRECT CONTACT WITH THEM SINCE HE LIVED OUTSIDE OF SAUDI ARABIA AFTER 1991. LIKE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY SAUDI RELIGIOUS LEADER MUHAMMAD IBN ABD AL-WAHHAB, THESE PREACHERS ARE STRICT INTERPRETERS OF THE TEACHINGS OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY HANBALI THEOLOGIAN IBN TAYMIYYA, KNOWN FOR HIS LITERALISM IN INTERPRETING THE QUR'AN, OPPOSITION TO INNOVATION, AND VIEW THAT CHRISTIANS AND JEWS DISTORTED THEIR SACRED BOOKS. BIN LADIN FREQUENTLY QUOTES IBN TAYMIYYA, ESPECIALLY WHEN JUSTIFYING THE NEED TO FIGHT HERESY IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD.

IN A MARCH 1997 INTERVIEW WITH A PAKISTANI JOURNALIST WHO VISITED HIS CAMP IN AFGHANISTAN, BIN LADIN WAS ASKED "WHO IS YOUR IDEAL PERSONALITY, IN TODAY'S WORLD?" BIN LADIN RESPONDED, "SHAYKH SALMAN AL-AWDAH WOULD BE MY IDEAL." SALMAN AL-AWDAH, WHO REMAINS IMPRISONED AND REPORTEDLY IS IN FAILING HEALTH, ARGUES THAT THE MUSLIM "UMMAH" (NATION) IS IN A STATE OF CRISIS THAT REQUIRES ALL MUSLIMS TO TAKE UP AN ARMED STRUGGLE TO SAVE IT. IN A TAPE SMUGGLED FROM PRISON IN 1995, HE DECLARED: "THE ISLAMIC WORLD TODAY, I SAY IT FRANKLY TO EVERY FRIEND AND FOE, ...IS TRANSFORMING INTO A FACTORY: A BUSY FACTORY TO PREPARE THE FIGHTERS. THE ONE WHO WILL NOT FIGHT OUT OF FAITH AND ENTHUSIASM, YOU WILL FIND HIM COMPELLED TO FIGHT FOR HIS OWN SURVIVAL BECAUSE HE HAS NO OTHER WAY. ... IT IS DEATH THAT GIVES LIFE, YES, IT IS JIHAD FOR THE SAKE OF ALLAH, THE OBLIGED FATE OF THIS UMMAH. OTHERWISE IT IS EXTINCTION. IF THE UMMAH ABANDONED JIHAD AND IGNORED IT, THEN ALLAH WILL HIT IT AND PUNISH IT BY

MAKING IT LOW AMONG THE NATIONS, LIKE THE PROPHET... SAID: IF YOU ABANDONED JIHAD, AND BECAME SATISFIED WITH GROWING PLANTS, THEN ALLAH WILL CAUSE YOU TO BECOME LOW AMONG THE NATIONS, AND YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO COME OUT OF IT UNTIL YOU RETURN TO YOUR RELIGION AND DECLARE JIHAD FOR THE SAKE OF ALLAH."

MORE RECENTLY BIN LADIN ALSO SPOKE ADMIRINGLY ABOUT A SERMON BY A FORMER IMAM OF THE PROPHET'S MOSQUE IQMADINAH, SHAYKH ALI ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-HUTHAYFI. DURING RAFSANJANI'S VISIT TO THE PROPHET'S MOSQUE IN FEBRUARY 1998, AL-HUTHAYFI VIRULENTLY ATTACKED SHIAS, PROCLAIMED THAT THERE COULD BE NO ACCOMMODATION BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND JEWS, CHRISTIANS AND OTHER "UNBELIEVERS," AND CRITICIZED THE PRESENCE OF U.S. TROOPS IN THE GULF REGION.

1B. (S) DOES BIN LADIN CONSIDER HIMSELF TO BE A RELIGIOUS LEADER?

WHILE ONLY BIN LADIN HIMSELF CAN DEFINITELY ANSWER THIS QUESTION, IT WOULD APPEAR FROM HIS STATEMENTS THAT BIN LADIN DOES NOT CONSIDER HIMSELF TO BE A RELIGIOUS SCHOLAR OR IMAM. HE PRESENTS HIMSELF AS A DEEPLY RELIGIOUS AND COMMITTED "MUJAHID" (JIHAD WARRIOR) FIGHTING TO DEFEND THE ISLAMIC "UMMAH" FROM HEREQAND THE THREAT HE BELIEVES IS POSED BY THE UNITED STATES, ISRAEL, AND THEIR ALLIES.

1C. (S) RELIGIOUS CREDENTIALS:

USAMA BIN LADIN DOES NOT HAVE CONVENTIONAL ISLAMIC CREDENTIALS. THAT IS TO SAY, HE DID NOT PURSUE FORMAL ISLAMIC STUDIES IN ANY RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION OR EVEN INDEPENDENTLY UNDER A RELIGIOUS SCHOLAR. HE IS HOWEVER, A DEEPLY RELIGIOUS MAN WHO IS MORE INTERESTED IN ACTION THAN IN CONTEMPLATION. AS FAR AS WE CAN DISCERN (NOT HAVING THE ABILITY TO CONDUCT A POLL AMONG HIS FOLLOWERS), HE IS VIEWED BY HIS FOLLOWERS NOT AS A RELIGIOUS LEADER BUT AS A MUSLIM WARRIOR LEADING THE FIGHT TO PROTECT AND DEFEND THE ISLAMIC "UMMAH." EVEN MANY SAUDIS WHO BELIEVE HE IS MISGUIDED ACKNOWLEDGE HIS RELIGIOUS FERVOR; MANY WHO DEPLORE HIS CALL FOR VIOLENCE NEVERTHELESS SEE HIS REACTION TO U.S. POLICIES, ESPECIALLY ITS SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL AS "UNDERSTANDABLE."

1D. (S) DOES BIN LADIN CONSIDER HIMSELF TO BE THE LEADER OR MERELY ONE OF MANY LEADERS OF A WORLDWIDE ISLAMIC MOVEMENT?

IN STATEMENTS MADE FOR WESTERN CONSUMPTION, BIN LADIN HAS BEEN AT PAINS TO EMPHASIZE THAT DESPITE HIS ISOLATION IN AFGHANISTAN, HE IS PART OF AN INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC MOVEMENT.

1E. (S) BIN LADIN'S OBJECTIVES:

BIN LADIN'S IMMEDIATE STATED OBJECTIVE IS THE EXPULSION OF U.S. TROOPS FROM SAUDI ARABIA, THE ARABIAN PENINSULA, AND ALL MUSLIM COUNTRIES. BEYOND THAT GOAL, IN MARCH 1997, BIN LADIN TOLD A PAKISTANI JOURNALIST THAT "MUSLIMS NEED A LEADER WHO CAN UNITE THEM AND ESTABLISH A GOVERNMENT WHICH FOLLOWS THE RULE OF THE CALIPHS. THE RULE OF THE CALIPHS WILL BEGIN FROM AFGHANISTAN. IT WILL ADOPT INTEREST-FREE BANKING. THE RULE OF ALLAH WILL BE ESTABLISHED. WE ARE AGAINST COMMUNISM BUT WE ARE ALSO AGAINST CAPITALISM. THE CONCENTRATION OF WEALTH IN JUST A FEW HANDS IS UNISLAMIC." HE DOES NOT SPECIFY WHO IS QUALIFIED TO BECOME A CALIPH, OR HOW HIS MOVEMENT WILL SPREAD FROM AFGHANISTAN TO THE REST OF THE MUSLIM WORLD. BIN LADIN'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS TEND TO BE MORE EXHORTATORY THAN PRESCRIPTIVE IN NATURE; HE SPEAKS AS A WARRIOR URGING HIS FOLLOWERS TO RISE UP AGAINST THE UNITED STATES AND OTHER ENEMIES OF ISLAM AND NOT AS A REVOLUTIONARY WITH A PROGRAM TO ESTABLISH AN ISLAMIC STATE. IT IS NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR, FOR EXAMPLE, WHETHER HE SEEKS A COMPLETE OVERTHROW OF THE MONARCHY IN SAUDI ARABIA. HE HAS CHARGED THE KING AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE AL SAUD WITH HERESY, BUT HAS ALSO SAID THAT "MANY PRINCES SHARE THE PUBLIC'S CONCERN AND PRIVATELY VOICE OPPOSITION TO WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE COUNTRY IN TERMS OF TERROR, REPRESSION, AND CORRUPTION," IMPLYING, PERHAPS, THAT ONE OF THEM MIGHT BE QUALIFIED TO RULE. BIN LADIN'S FIXATION WITH EXPELLING JEWS, CHRISTIANS AND OTHER UNBELIEVERS FROM MUSLIM LANDS SUGGESTS THAT HE BELIEVES THAT ONCE THEY ARE GONE, ALL PROBLEMS FACED BY THE MUSLIM "UMMAH" WILL DISAPPEAR.

1F. (S) TIES WITH HIS FAMILY:

MEMBERS OF BIN LADIN'S FAMILY HAVE TOLD US THAT THEY HAVE NOT HAD CONTACTS WITH HIM SINCE 1996, WHEN BIN LADIN SENT HIS HALF-BROTHER BAKR WORD THAT HE WOULD BE WILLING TO RETURN TO SAUDI ARABIA IF HIS FAMILY WOULD SECURE THE RELEASE OF CERTAIN POLITICAL PRISONERS. THE FAMILY REFUSED. THE BIN LADIN FAMILY'S CONTINUED STRONG TIES WITH THE KING AND OTHER ROYAL FAMILY MEMBERS ARE GOOD INDICATORS THAT THERE IS PROBABLY VERY LITTLE CONTACT WITH USAMA. FROM TIME TO TIME INDIVIDUAL BROTHERS HAVE CONTACTED USAMA IN FUTILE EFFORTS TO PERSUADE HIM TO GIVE UP HIS WAYS AND RETURN TO THE KINGDOM. HOWEVER, BY NOW THE FAMILY HAS LARGELY GIVEN UP ON HIM. AS ONE OF HIS BROTHERS CONFIDED TO AN EMBOFF LATE LAST YEAR, "AS FAR AS THE FAMILY IS CONCERNED, USAMA IS DEAD, AND IT WOULD BE MUCH BETTER IF HE WERE KILLED."

AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, BUSINESSMEN IN PROMINENT JEDDAH MERCHANT FAMILIES CONCEDE THAT WHILE THE BIN LADIN FAMILY HAS DISAVOWED USAMA, BLOOD TIES CANNOT BE ENTIRELY DENIED, AND THEY HAVE MENTIONED HIS CONNECTIONS WITH HIS MOTHER AND SISTERS WHO LIVE IN JEDDAH. JAMAL KHASHOGGI, AN ISLAMIC MOVEMENT SPECIALIST FOR "AL-HAYAT" NEWSPAPER, TOLD US RECENTLY THAT USAMA'S SON ABDALLAH LIVES IN JEDDAH, BUT THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO SUSPECT USAMA'S RELATIVES OF HAVING ANYTHING TO DO WITH TERRORISM.

ANOTHER ONE OF USAMA'S ELDER BROTHERS, YAHYA BIN LADIN, RECENTLY TOLD CONSULATE JEDDAH CONTACTS THAT HE FELT HE HAD MADE TWO STRATEGIC MISTAKES WITH RESPECT TO HIS YOUNGER SIBLING. FIRST, HE HAD NOT OFFERED HIM A POSITION IN THE FAMILY COMPANY, AND SECOND, HE DID NOT GO TO SUDAN FOUR YEARS AGO TO PERSUADE USAMA TO COME BACK TO SAUDI ARABIA BEFORE HE "TURNED AWAY FROM THE FOLD." ANOTHER CONTACT, A SAUDI ISLAMIC MOVEMENT SPECIALIST WHO HAS LONG KNOWN USAMA, CLAIMS USAMA NOW HAS NOT MORE THAN 50 PEOPLE AROUND HIM.

1G. (S) RELATIONS WITH OTHER ISLAMIST GROUPS AND RELATIONS WITH SHIA DISSIDENTS:

WHILE BIN LADIN HAS ATTEMPTED TO PORTRAY HIMSELF AS ONE MEMBER IN A WORLDWIDE ALLIANCE OF MUSLIM ORGANIZATIONS, A LOOK AT WHICH ORGANIZATIONS ACTUALLY COOPERATE WITH HIM REVEALS THAT HIS NETWORK IS PROBABLY NOT AS BROAD AS BIN LADIN WOULD LIKE TO HAVE US THINK. SINCE HIS EARLY DAYS IN AFGHANISTAN, HE HAS HAD LINKS WITH MEMBERS OF THE EGYPTIAN AL-GAMA'AH AL-ISLAMIYYA (RIFA'I AHMAD TAHA, "AMIR" OF THE GROUP, AND MUHAMMAD SHAWQI AL-ISLAMBULI AND MUSTAFA HAMZAH (AKA ABU-HAZIM) HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN LIVING IN AFGHANISTAN WITH BIN LADIN) AND THE ISLAMIC JIHAD (AYMAN AL-ZAWAHIRI, THE EGYPTIAN JIHAD "AMIR," IS REPORTEDLY HIS CLOSEST ASSOCIATE.) DURING THE AFGHANISTAN WAR, BIN LADIN COLLABORATED CLOSELY WITH THE LATE PALESTINIAN ISLAMIST ABDALLAH AZZAM IN SETTING UP THE "JIHAD AND RELIEF" GUEST HOUSE IN PESHAWAR TO RECEIVE MUJAHIDEEN VOLUNTEERS ON THEIR WAY TO AFGHANISTAN. DURING THIS TIME, IN ADDITION TO FINANCING RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND SUPPORT OF THE ARAB VOLUNTEERS, BIN LADIN IS SAID TO HAVE PROVIDED SUPPORT FOR GROUPS SUCH AS HAMAS AND THE YEMENI ISLAMIC JIHAD GROUP HEADED BY SHAYKH ZINDANI. DURING HIS TIME IN SUDAN, BIN LADIN, AS A GUEST OF HASAN TURABI, IS SAID TO HAVE DEVELOPED LINKS WITH THE ISLAMIC SALVATION FRONT IN ALGERIA. SINCE THEN BIN LADIN HAS BEEN A BENEFACTOR TO ISLAMIC MILITANT GROUPS IN PAKISTAN, TAJIKISTAN, BOSNIA AND JORDAN. HIS ROLE VIS A VIS MOST OF THESE GROUPS, HOWEVER, APPEARS TO BE LIMITED TO THAT OF FINANCIER AND SUPPORTER; HE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE FORGING A WORLDWIDE ALLIANCE BETWEEN THESE QUITE DISPARATE GROUPS. THE SO-CALLED FATWA URGING MUSLIMS TO "KILL AMERICANS EVERYWHERE" ISSUED IN FEBRUARY 1998 WAS SIGNED ONLY BY AYMAN AL-ZAWAHIRI OF THE EGYPTIAN JIHAD, RIFA'I AHMAD TAHA OF THE AL-GAMA'AH AL-ISLAMIYYA, SHAYKH MIR HAMZA, SECRETARY OF THE JAMIAT-UL-ULAMA-E-PAKISTAN, AND FAZLUL RAHMAN, AMIR OF THE JIHAD MOVEMENT IN BANGLADESH. OTHER MEMBERS OF THE JAMIAT-UL-ULAMA-E-PAKISTAN SUBSEQUENTLY DISAVOWED ANY LINKS WITH BIN LADIN. THERE ARE ALSO REPORTS THAT AL-GAMA'AH AL-ISLAMIYYA HAVE DISTANCED THEMSELVES FROM BIN LADIN.

THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT BIN LADIN HAS LINKS WITH SHIA DISSIDENTS IN SAUDI ARABIA, AND WE SUSPECT THAT, GIVEN THE THEOLOGICAL SCHISMS BETWEEN THE SAUDI SUNNI RADICALS AND THE SHIA, BIN LADIN WOULD NOT BE INCLINED TO MAKE COMMON CAUSE WITH THEM. BIN LADIN'S APPLAUSE FOR FORMER MEDINA IMAM AL-HUTHAYFI'S VERY PUBLIC INSULT OF IRANIAN EX-PRESIDENT RAFSANJANI IS LIKELY A GOOD INDICATOR OF HIS THINKING ON RELATIONS WITH THE SHIA IN SAUDI ARABIA AND IN IRAN. SHIA IN THE EASTERN PROVINCE VIEW BIN

LADIN AND HIS IDEOLOGY AS ANTI-SHIA.

1H. (S) CONTACTS WITH NON-MUSLIM (INCLUDING SECULAR) GROUPS OPPOSED TO THE UNITED STATES AND THE WEST:

WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE OF ANY SUCH CONTACTS, AND GIVEN BIN LADIN'S FANATICISM AND INTENSE INTOLERANCE OF NON-MUSLIMS, WE DOUBT THAT HE IS INTERESTED IN MAKING COMMON CAUSE WITH NON-MUSLIMS.

1I. (S) SYMPATHY TOWARDS BIN LADIN IN SAUDI INSTITUTIONS:

EMBASSY IS UNABLE TO CONDUCT SURVEYS TO DETERMINE THE LEVEL OF SYMPATHY TOWARDS BIN LADIN IN VARIOUS SAUDI INSTITUTIONS AND CONSTITUENCIES. HOWEVER, BASED ON OUR CONTACTS WITH SAUDIS IN THESE INSTITUTIONS, EMBASSY PROVIDES THE FOLLOWING ASSESSMENT OF LIKELY SAUDI SYMPATHY FOR BIN LADIN:

THE MILITARY: LOW

THE NATIONAL GUARD: LOW

MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR: LOW

THE ULAMA: HIGH IN SOME QUARTERS, I.E., AMONG NEO-SALAFIS, BUT NOT AMONG THE MAINSTREAM IMAMS.

THE ROYAL DIWAN: LOW. IT IS VERY DOUBTFUL THAT THE ROYAL FAMILY'S MINIONS ARE INTERESTED IN BITING THE HANDS THAT FEED THEM.

THE MAJLIS AL-SHURA: LOW, ALTHOUGH SOME OF THE CONSERVATIVE RELIGIOUS MEMBERS WERE SYMPATHETIC TO CALLS BY THE AWAKENING MOVEMENT FOR A STRICTER APPLICATION OF SHARIA LAW.

ACADEMIA: MEDIUM; SYMPATHY, IF NOT AGREEMENT WITH BIN LADIN'S METHODS, MAY BE HIGHER AMONG CONSERVATIVE ISLAMIC SCHOLARS IN INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS IMAM MUHAMMAD BIN SAUD UNIVERSITY, WHOSE MEMBERS HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE AWAKENING MOVEMENT AND OTHER OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES. UNIVERSITY FACULTY ALSO INCLUDE WESTERN EDUCATED LIBERALS WHOSE SYMPATHY IS LOW.

ARAB EXPATRIATES: LOW, ALTHOUGH POSSIBLY HIGHER AMONG YEMENIS AND SUDANESE.

BUSINESSMEN: MIXED. SOME SYMPATHY. IN GENERAL, JEDDAH MERCHANT FAMILIES, MANY OF WHOSE MEMBERS KNOW USAMA FROM HIS YOUNGER DAYS, HAVE EMPHASIZED TO US THAT THE U.S. MEDIA IS ELEVATING USAMA AND GIVING HIM A POWER HE NEVER WOULD HAVE HAD OTHERWISE. A NUMBER HAVE LAMENTED THAT THE STALEMATE IN THE PEACE PROCESS AND WHAT IS PERCEIVED AS UNLIMITED SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL REGARDLESS OF ITS ACTIONS HAS LED SOME SAUDIS TO BE MORE TOLERANT OF USAMA THAN THEY MIGHT OTHERWISE BE.

WOMEN: EXTREMELY LOW. BIN LADIN AND THE CLERICS HE ADMIRES ARE OPPOSED TO WOMEN'S RIGHTS; THE AWAKENING MOVEMENT SEEMS TO FIND FEW ADHERENTS AMONG SAUDI WOMEN.

THE SAUDI PUBLIC AT LARGE: BIN LADIN'S CALL TO VIOLENCE IS NOT ONE THAT RESONATES WITH MOST SAUDIS. THE ISLAMIC INJUNCTION AGAINST TAKING ACTIONS WHICH MIGHT LEAD TO "FITNA" (SOCIAL CHAOS) IS DEEPLY INGRAINED IN THIS SOCIETY. INTERESTINGLY, OVER THE LAST YEAR OR SO, THE RELIGIOUS DEBATE ABOUT WHEN ISLAMIC LAW ALLOWS FOR REMOVAL OF A MUSLIM LEADER HAS BEEN PUBLICLY AIRED, SUGGESTING A REACTION TO CHARGES BY BIN LADIN AND OPPOSITION MEMBERS THAT THE KING AND THE AL SAUD HAVE UNDERTAKEN HERETICAL ACTS AND MUST BE REMOVED FROM POWER. IN A LENGTHY INTERVIEW, MAJLIS AL-SHURA PRESIDENT AND SENIOR SCHOLAR SHAYKH BIN JUBAYR OPINED THAT REMOVING A RULER IS ALLOWABLE ONLY UNDER THE NARROWEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES, AND GRAND MUFTI SHAYKH BIN BAZ ISSUED A FATWA REMINDING MUSLIMS THAT IN MOST INSTANCES IT IS FORBIDDEN. WE THINK THAT MOST SAUDIS PROBABLY AGREE.

HOWEVER, BIN LADIN'S STATEMENTS REFLECT THE FRUSTRATION THAT MANY MIDDLE CLASS SAUDIS FEEL ABOUT THEIR ECONOMIC SITUATION, FRUSTRATION THAT WILL GROW AS PER CAPITA INCOMES DECLINE. IN A 1996 INTERVIEW BIN LADIN CORRECTLY OBSERVED THAT SAUDIS WONDER "IS OURS REALLY THE WORLD'S LARGEST OIL EXPORTING COUNTRY?" IN ADDITION, HIS ANTIPATHY TOWARDS U.S. POLICY THAT IS SUPPORTIVE OF ISRAEL IS WIDELY SHARED BY MOST SAUDIS. THERE IS A CERTAIN

RESPECT FOR BIN LADIN AS A MAN MOTIVATED BY RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLE, AND, WHILE MOST SAUDIS WOULD NOT FOLLOW HIM, MANY SHARE HIS FRUSTRATIONS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE RELIGIOUS WEEKLY, "AL MUSLIMUN," WHO KNOWS USAMA, TOLD US HE RESPECTS HIM FOR HIS ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE WAR AGAINST THE USSR, NOTING THAT HE BUILT SOME USEFUL TUNNELS THROUGH THE AFGHAN MOUNTAINS. AFTER THE BOMBINGS OF EMBASSIES NAIROBI AND DAR ES-SALAAM, EMBOFFS HEARD FROM MANY SAUDI CONTACTS WHO CONDEMNED THE ATTACKS BUT ALSO FELT THEY WERE INEVITABLE GIVEN WHAT THEY SEE AS AMERICA'S UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT OF ISRAEL.

ACCORDING TO JAMAL KHASHOGGI, AN ISLAMIC MOVEMENT SPECIALIST FOR "AL HAYAT" NEWSPAPER, FEW PEOPLE IN JEDDAH DISLIKE USAMA, AND SOME CONTINUE TO SUPPORT HIM BECAUSE THEY ARE FED UP WITH THE AMERICAN PRESENCE/POLICY IN THE REGION. KHASHOGGI SAID THAT MANY PEOPLE CONSIDER USAMA BIN LADIN AS THE "CHE GUEVARA" OF THE ARAB WORLD. HE SAID THAT SOME HOPE THAT USAMA WILL DIE IN BATTLE SO THAT PEOPLE WILL NOT HAVE TO SUFFER THE "HUMILIATION" OF SEEING HIM TRANSPORTED IN HANDCUFFS TO THE U.S.

1J. (S) IS BIN LADIN VIEWED AS A TERRORIST OR AS AN ISLAMIC IDEOLOGUE?

SEE ABOVE. REACTION VARIES.

1K. (S) HOW IS BIN LADIN'S MESSAGE DISSEMINATED?

THE INTERNET, INTERNATIONAL ARAB PRESS, AND SATELLITE TELEVISION GUARANTEE THE DISSEMINATION OF BIN LADIN'S MESSAGES. THE INTENSE FOCUS OF THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON BIN LADIN FOLLOWING THE BOMBINGS OF EMBASSIES NAIROBI AND DAR ES-SALAAM HAS ASSURED BIN LADIN'S NOTORIETY AMONG EVEN THE MOST ISOLATED SAUDIS. INTERNATIONAL ARABIC JOURNALS SUCH AS AL-HAYAT, AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT, AND AL-QUDS AL-ARABI ARE ALSO WIDELY READ HERE.

1L. (S) WHAT COMMUNICATION DOES BIN LADIN HAVE WITH SAUDI SOCIETY?

SEE ABOVE.

1M. (S) SAUDI PUBLIC OR PRIVATE FUNDING OF BIN LADIN?

THE SAG DOES NOT PROVIDE FUNDS DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY TO BIN LADIN OR HIS FOLLOWERS THROUGH ANY ORGANIZATION. THE SAG MONITORS PRIVATE SAUDI DONATIONS TO PRIVATE CHARITIES, BUT IT IS LIKELY THAT SOME MONEY MAKES ITS WAY TO ORGANIZATIONS WITH LINKS TO BIN LADIN. FOR EXAMPLE, ACCORDING TO "AL-HAYAT" ISLAMIC MOVEMENT SPECIALIST JAMAL KHASHOGGI, JIHAD IS ONE OF THE LEGITIMATE USES FOR ZAKAT, THE MANDATORY ISLAMIC TAX. SAUDI GRAND MUFTI SHAYKH BIN BAZ HAS ISSUED A NUMBER OF FATWAS SAYING THAT ZAKAT CAN BE GIVEN IN FOR JIHAD IN A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES, MOST RECENTLY FOR EXAMPLE, TO SUPPORT THE "JIHAD" IN KASHMIR. BIN LADIN IS KNOWN TO HAVE LINKS WITH GROUPS IN KASHMIR.

IT IS WIDELY RUMORED IN THE BUSINESS AND BANKING COMMUNITY IN RIYADH THAT THE ORIGINAL SOURCE OF USAMA'S MONEY WAS A \$300 MILLION SETTLEMENT HE OBTAINED WHEN HIS FAMILY BOUGHT OUT HIS SHARE IN THE MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR BIN LADIN GROUP CONGLOMERATE.

1N. (S) STATUS OF THE BIN LADIN FAMILY FOLLOWING BOMBINGS:

THE BIN LADIN FAMILY'S STATUS HAS NOT CHANGED. IT HAS PUBLICLY DISASSOCIATED ITSELF FROM USAMA, AND REMAINS CLOSELY LINKED TO THE ROYAL FAMILY AND HIGHLY RESPECTED IN BUSINESS CIRCLES.

1O. (S) ACCOMMODATION WITH THE AL SAUD:

BIN LADIN HAS REPEATEDLY SAID THAT HE WOULD REACH AN "ACCOMMODATION" WITH THE AL SAUD ONLY IF THEY MET HIS CONDITIONS OF EXPELLING U.S. TROOPS FROM SAUDI ARABIA AND IMPLEMENTING THE ISLAMIC AND SOCIAL REFORMS HE AND THE AWAKENING PREACHERS HAVE DEMANDED.

1P. (S) CONNECTIONS/OVERLAP BETWEEN BIN LADIN'S MESSAGE AND MAINSTREAM SAUDI ULAMA:

THERE IS NOT MUCH OVERLAP BETWEEN BIN LADIN, WHO IS A RADICAL ACTIVIST, AND THE "MAINSTREAM" ULAMA, WHOSE JOB IS TO LEGITIMIZE

AL SAUD RULE, EXCEPT REGARDING THE ISSUE OF ISRAEL, WHERE INTENSE FRUSTRATION OVER LACK OF PROGRESS IN THE PEACE PROCESS IS LEADING MANY MEMBERS OF THE ULAMA TO RECONSIDER THEIR POSITION THAT ACCOMMODATION WITH ISRAEL IS POSSIBLE.

1Q. (S) APPEAL OF THE ISLAMIC "AWAKENING" MOVEMENT:

THE AWAKENING MOVEMENT'S APPEAL REACHES BEYOND THE UNEMPLOYED AND THE RELIGIOUS ELITE. A LOOK AT WHO SIGNED THE 1992 "MEMORANDUM OF ADVICE" TO KING FAHD REVEALS A COALITION OF CLERICS, ACADEMICS (INCLUDING WESTERN-TRAINED SCHOLARS AND SCIENTISTS), AND RELIGIOUS AND LEGAL SCHOLARS THROUGHOUT SAUDI ARABIA. RIOTS IN BURAYDA FOLLOWING THE FIRST ARREST OF SALMAN AL-AWDAH DEMONSTRATED THE WIDE POPULAR FOLLOWING HE ENJOYS IN THE QASSIM REGION. THE AWAKENING MOVEMENT IS IN MANY WAYS A REACTION TO THE IMMENSE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES --AND ATTENDANT DISLOCATIONS-- THAT SAUDI ARABIA HAS UNDERGONE IN THE LAST THIRTY YEARS. IT IS ALSO A RESULT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC POLICY FAILURES, THE MILITARY INADEQUACIES REVEALED BY THE GULF WAR, AND A RELIGIOUSLY-BASED EDUCATION SYSTEM THAT HAS FAILED TO TRAIN SAUDI YOUTH TO FUNCTION IN A MODERN ECONOMY. IN THE FACE OF DECLINING STANDARDS OF LIVING, GROWING UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE COMPLEXITIES IMPOSED BY MODERNIZATION, THE AWAKENING MOVEMENT'S SIMPLE PRESCRIPTION OF A RETURN TO CORE ISLAMIC VALUES HAS WIDE, AND WE BELIEVE, GROWING APPEAL, DESPITE THE GOVERNMENT'S MASSIVE EFFORTS TO SUPPRESS THE MOVEMENT. IT IS BOTH BROADER-BASED AND DEEPER IN ITS SUPPORT THAN BIN LADIN'S "AL-QA'IDAH."

1R. (S) COMMUNICATIONS OF JAILED PREACHERS AL-AWDAH AND AL-HAWALI WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD:

AS FAR AS WE ARE ABLE TO DISCERN, THE PREACHERS' COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD HAVE BEEN VERY LIMITED OF LATE. FOR EXAMPLE, WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT THEY HAVE MANAGED TO SMUGGLE OUT ANY LETTERS OR TAPED MESSAGES TO THEIR SUPPORTERS IN THE LAST YEAR, WHEREAS AT THE BEGINNING OF THEIR INCARCERATION, REPORTS OF SUCH MESSAGES APPEARED PERIODICALLY.

1S. (S) EXPECTATIONS AMONG SUPPORTERS OF AL-AWDAH AND AL-HAWALI THAT THE PREACHERS WILL NOT RENOUNCE THEIR BELIEFS, AND WILL BE RELEASED:

THERE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE ANY EXPECTATION THAT EITHER AL-AWDAH OR AL-HAWALI WILL RENOUNCE HIS BELIEFS IN EXCHANGE FOR FREEDOM. HOWEVER, GIVEN THAT ANOTHER FIREBRAND PREACHER, SHAYKH AYIDH AL-QARNI, WAS RELEASED ALONG WITH SEVERAL OTHER AWAKENING PREACHERS AND SYMPATHIZERS LAST RAMADAN (RIYADH 292), IT IS POSSIBLE THAT SOME SORT OF AGREEMENT THAT WOULD ALLOW FOR THEIR RELEASE MIGHT BE REACHED. APPARENTLY BOTH PREACHERS ARE IN POOR HEALTH, AND IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT THEY COULD BE RELEASED FOR HEALTH REASONS.

1T. (S) COMMON SAUDI VIEW OF CHRISTIANS/JEWS:

ACCORDING TO THE PURITANICAL AND XENOPHOBIC WAHHABI BRAND OF ISLAM PRACTICED IN SAUDI ARABIA, ALL NON-MUSLIMS ARE CONSIDERED TO BE "UNBELIEVERS." SOPHISTICATED SCHOLARS WILL EXPLAIN THAT THIS MEANS THAT NON-MUSLIMS ARE CONSIDERED "UNBELIEVERS" VIS A VIS THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD, BUT THAT CHRISTIANS AND JEWS, AS "PEOPLE OF THE BOOK," ARE DUE SPECIAL CONSIDERATION SINCE THEY WORSHIP THE SAME GOD AND FOLLOW MANY OF THE SAME PROPHETS. LESS SOPHISTICATED SAUDIS TEND TO SIMPLY VIEW ALL NON-MUSLIMS AS UNBELIEVERS WITHOUT MAKING THIS DISTINCTION. EDUCATED SAUDIS WHO HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO THE WEST TEND NOT TO BE TROUBLED BY THIS, BUT SOME CONSERVATIVE RELIGIOUS SAUDIS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT DEALING WITH NON-MUSLIMS TO THE POINT WHERE THEY WONDER IF IT IS PROPER TO USE THE TRADITIONAL ISLAMIC GREETING, "PEACE BE UPON YOU," WITH A NON-MUSLIM. GROWING FRUSTRATION WITH THE PEACE PROCESS AND THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE AND THE DAMAGE TO IRAQI SOCIETY AS A RESULT OF EIGHT YEARS OF U.N. SANCTIONS ALSO COMPLICATE VIEWS OF JEWS AND CHRISTIANS; A WIDELY SHARED BELIEF IS THAT THE U.S. INABILITY TO PERSUADE ISRAEL TO MAKE CONCESSIONS IN THE PEACE PROCESS OR REMOVE SADDAM HUSSEIN FROM POWER ARE ACTUALLY INTENTIONAL AND STEM FROM AN INNATE HOSTILITY TO THE MUSLIM WORLD. THIS BELIEF IS SKILLFULLY EXPLOITED BY PEOPLE LIKE BIN LADIN.

THERE IS A DEBATE AMONG SAUDI SCHOLARS ABOUT CONTACT WITH NON-MUSLIMS, FOR EXAMPLE, WHETHER MUSLIMS SHOULD VISIT NON-MUSLIM

COUNTRIES, AND WHETHER CHRISTIANS AND JEWS TODAY CAN BE CONSIDERED "PEOPLE OF THE BOOK." AT THE HEART OF THE DEBATE ARE TWO SAYINGS ATTRIBUTED TO THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD: FIRST, "I WILL MOVE THE JEWS AND THE CHRISTIANS OUT OF THE ARABIAN PENINSULA AND I WILL LEAVE ONLY MUSLIMS IN IT." AND SECOND, "THERE CANNOT BE TWO RELIGIONS IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA." THE FIRST IS A SAYING WHOSE AUTHENTICITY IS WELL-DOCUMENTED AND ACCEPTED BY MOST MUSLIM SCHOLARS; THE SECOND IS CONSIDERED FLAWED SINCE IT IS MISSING SOME OF THE DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED FOR COMPLETE AUTHENTICATION. USAMA BIN LADIN AND THE AWAKENING PREACHERS POINT TO THE FIRST SAYING AS THE BASIS FOR THEIR OPPOSITION TO THE PRESENCE OF NON-MUSLIM TROOPS IN THE KINGDOM. SOME CONSERVATIVE CLERICS SAY IT MEANS THAT JEWS AND CHRISTIANS DISTORTED THEIR HOLY BOOKS TO THE POINT THAT THEY CAN NO LONGER BE CONSIDERED "PEOPLE OF THE BOOK" WORTHY OF SPECIAL TREATMENT, AND THEREFORE MUST BE REMOVED FROM THE KINGDOM. SOME SCHOLARS, SUCH AS FORMER MADINAH IMAM SHAYKH AL-HUTHAYFI, USE THIS SAYING TO SUPPORT THEIR CONTENTION THAT THERE CAN BE NO ACCOMMODATION BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND JEWS AND CHRISTIANS. MORE TOLERANT SCHOLARS SAY THAT THIS SAYING MUST BE CONSIDERED IN ITS CONTEXT, THAT THE PROPHET WAS REFERRING TO JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN FIGHTERS AND WAS NOT REFERRING TO ALL JEWS AND CHRISTIANS. THE SECOND SAYING IS WHAT MANY CONSERVATIVE SCHOLARS CONSIDER TO BE THE BASIS FOR THE INJUNCTION AGAINST PUBLIC NON-MUSLIM WORSHIP IN THE KINGDOM.

1U. (S) DOES SAG TOLERANCE OF PRIVATE NON-MUSLIM WORSHIP EXACERBATE ANTI-CHRISTIAN, ANTI-AMERICAN FEELINGS AMONG SAUDIS?

THE SAG'S MORE TOLERANT POLICY HAS NOT BEEN IN EFFECT FOR VERY LONG AND IS NOT PUBLICIZED, SO IT IS PERHAPS TOO EARLY TO DETERMINE IF A BACKLASH HAS DEVELOPED. THUS FAR, EMBASSY HAS NO EVIDENCE OF AN INCREASE IN ANTI-CHRISTIAN OR ANTI-AMERICAN FEELINGS ATTRIBUTABLE TO SAG TOLERANCE OF PRIVATE NON-MUSLIM WORSHIP.

1V. (S) SHIFT IN TONE OR CONTENT OF AVERAGE FRIDAY SERMON OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS:

SINCE THE SAG CRACK-DOWN ON THE AWAKENING MOVEMENT THAT BEGAN IN 1994, FRIDAY SERMONS HAVE BEEN LARGELY DE-POLITICIZED. THE SAG'S RE-ORGANIZATION OF THE RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENT IN 1994 PUT THE MINISTRY OF ISLAMIC AFFAIRS IN CHARGE OF IMAMS AND THE CONTENT OF SERMONS, STRICTLY LIMITING THE ABILITY OF ANY PREACHER TO DO ANYTHING BUT TOE THE AL SAUD LINE. POLITICAL TOPICS OCCASIONALLY COME UP, AS IN THE CASE OF THE PUBLIC INSULT OF FORMER IRANIAN PRESIDENT RAFSANJANI AT THE PROPHET'S MOSQUE IN MADINAH, BUT IMAMS WHO STRAY FROM THEIR APPROVED TEXT RARELY GET A SECOND CHANCE. ON THE SOCIAL FRONT, HOWEVER, IMAMS ARE GIVEN MUCH MORE FREEDOM, AND TOPICS SUCH AS THE ROLE OF WOMEN, TREATMENT OF SERVANTS, PROPER BEHAVIOR DURING RAMADAN, FOREIGN TRAVEL, CONTACTS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN, ETC., ARE VIGOROUSLY DEBATED FROM PULPITS AROUND THE COUNTRY.

12. (U) MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.

FOWLER